FAMINE IN RUSSIA

Englishman's Story

WHAT HE SAW ON A WALKING TOUR

BERLIN, MARCH 29.

"Russia to-day is in the grip of famine, which is proving as disastrous as the catastrophe of 1921, when millions died," said Mr. Gareth Jones, formerly one of Mr. Lloyd George's political secretaries, when he arrived in Berlin this morning on his way to London after a long walking trip through the Ukraine and other districts of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Jones, who speaks Russian fluently, is reporting to the Institute of International Affairs to-morrow. In an interview with the New York "Evening Post," Mr. Jones said that famine on a colossal scale was impending. It meant death to millions by hunger and the beginnings of serious unemployment in a land which has hitherto prided itself of every man having a job. This summed up Mr. Jones's first-hand observations

The arrest of the British engineers in Moscow is a symbol of panic, and is a consequence of conditions worse than in 1921, when millions died of hunger (declared Mr. Jones). The trial, beginning on Saturday, of the British engineers is merely a sequel to the recent shooting of 35 prominent workers of agriculture, including the vice commissar in the Ministry of Agriculture, in an attempt to check the popular wrath at the famine which haunts every district of the Soviet Union.

I walked alone through villages and twelve collective farms. Everywhere was the cry, "There is no bread; we are dying." This cry came to me from every part of Russia. In a train a Communist denied to me that there was a famine. I flung into the spittoon a crust of bread I had been eating from my own supply. The peasant, my fellow-passenger, fished it out and ravenously ate it. I threw orange peel into the spittoon. The peasant again grabbed and devoured it. The Communist subsided.

A foreign expert returning from Kazakstan told me that one million out of five million have died of hunger. I can believe it. After Stalin the most hated man in Russia is Bernard Shaw; to many of those who can read and have read his descriptions of plentiful food in their starving land the future is blacker than the present. There is insufficient seed. Many of the peasants are too weak to work the land. The new taxation policy, which promised to take only a fixed amount of grain from the peasants, will fail to encourage production because the peasants refuse to trust the Government.

In short, the Government's policy of collectivisation and the peasants' resistance to it have brought Russia to the worst catastrophe since the famine of 1921 swept away the population of whole districts. Coupled with this, the prime reason for the breakdown is the lack of skilled labour and the collapse of transport and finance.

—Reuter.